

## **Can Your Diet Heal You?**

Robert Avery MD, FACP

[www.citrinesun.com](http://www.citrinesun.com)

[AskDrAvery@citrinesun.com](mailto:AskDrAvery@citrinesun.com)

We are a sick society. One in three women and one in two men will get cancer in their lifetimes, 1.1 Million Americans will have a heart attack each year, and 2/3 of our population is overweight and 1/3 is obese. We are living longer thanks to technology but with the burden of chronic diseases. We know what you eat can help prevent disease, but can it heal us if we are already sick? The short answer is yes. The processes that make us sick, bad genes, inflammation, oxidation, and a poor immune system are affected by the foods we eat.

There seems to be a gene for every disorder. If you listen to the media you would think that you have no control over your health because a gene dictates your health. There are genes for Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, colon cancer, breast cancer, and obesity, but having a bad gene does not mean you will have the disease. In fact, research now has shown that some of these bad genes can be turned off by the foods we eat and good genes can be turned on. Oleic acid in Olive oil has been shown to turn off the Her-2 neu oncogene which is a very bad gene in breast cancer patients.

Cruciferous vegetables, broccoli and cauliflower, turn on genes that are responsible for breaking down cancer causing substances in your gut. Green tea can turn off genes associated with lung cancer and breast cancer. The scientific field studying how diet affects genes is called nutri-genomics and it is an exciting and growing field of study.

Chronic inflammation is the result of an uncontrolled immune system. The immune system is necessary to fight infections and even prevent cancers. When the immune system doesn't turn off you have chronic inflammation. Chronic inflammation is associated with a variety of diseases including heart disease, stroke, arthritis, cancer, and Alzheimer's disease. Eating processed foods, white sugar, white flour, red meat, cured meats, or corn oil can lead to an excess of inflammatory cytokines (chronic inflammation). Good foods that can turn off inflammation include omega-3 fatty acids (olive oil, flaxseed and fish oil), and fruits and vegetables.

Oxidation is the result of normal metabolism. When we use energy we produce free oxygen radicals. These radicals can oxidize or damage our mitochondria and DNA. Oxidation is increased when we exercise and when we are under stress but your body has a wonderful system of anti-oxidants. Essential nutrients to eliminate these include beta-carotene, vitamins A and C, selenium, alpha-lipoic acid, carnitine, ginkgo biloba, green tea, grape seed extract, lutein, lycopene and coenzyme Q10. Of course these will be found in a diet high in fruits and vegetables. In situations where one is deficient, supplements are available.

The immune system is instrumental in protecting us from infections but did you

know it also helps prevent certain cancers? Our diet can work to improve our immune system. Scientific studies have demonstrated improvements in white blood cells, natural killer cells and immunoglobulins when our diet includes sources of vitamin C, vitamin E, carotenoids, bioflavonoids, zinc, garlic, selenium, omega-3 fatty acids, and mushrooms (maitake, reishi, shiitake).

The foods we eat are essential for good health. Science is demonstrating how diet boosts our immune systems and reduces inflammation and oxidation and turns off bad genes. Hippocrates had the right idea more than 2000 years ago when he said, "Let thy food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food."

*Dr. Avery, a practicing oncologist in St. Louis, is owner of Citrine Sun, a company dedicated to helping cancer patients through every step of their cancer journey. His website is [www.citrinesun.com](http://www.citrinesun.com) and he can be reached at [AskDrAvery@citrinesun.com](mailto:AskDrAvery@citrinesun.com).*